

H.R. 1300, First Responder Anthrax Preparedness Act, as amended

FLOOR SITUATION

On Monday, July 27, 2015, the House will consider [H.R. 1300](#), the *First Responder Anthrax Preparedness Act*, as amended, under suspension of the rules. H.R. 1300 was introduced on March 4, 2015, by Rep. Peter King (R-NY) and was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security, and in addition, to the Committee on Energy and Commerce. The Committee on Homeland Security ordered the bill reported, as amended, by voice vote on May 20, 2015.

SUMMARY

H.R. 1300 directs the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, to make anthrax vaccines from the Strategic National Stockpile available to first responders who volunteer to receive them. Specifically, the bill:

- Directs the Department of Homeland Security to establish a tracking system for the vaccines and conduct educational outreach to first responders about the existence of the voluntary program;
- Requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to support risk assessments of the threats posed by anthrax from an act of terror and share any information concerning these threats with State, local, and tribal authorities, as well as other national biosecurity and biodefense stakeholders; and,
- Establishes a pilot program within the Department of Homeland Security to provide anthrax vaccines to first responders. The pilot program, which must be completed 24 months after initial vaccinations, shall include first responders based in at least two states, and require an annual report to be completed within one year of enactment that details the progress and results of the program. The report shall also include a plan by the Secretary of Homeland Security to continue to provide vaccines to first responders at the conclusion of the pilot program.

BACKGROUND

An anthrax attack is considered a serious mass casualty threat. In 2001, anthrax spores were mailed to the offices of several news media outlets and two U.S. Senators, killing 5 people and infecting 17 others. This led to an eight-year investigation by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and millions of dollars spent on cleanup of the Capitol Complex.¹ Pre-event vaccination is a safe and effective way to provide protection to first responders who are responsible for responding to an anthrax attack. Pre-vaccinated responders could be deployed immediately and confidently in the event of an attack without the fear of contracting the disease. The first responder community has previously requested this capability.²

The Department of Homeland Security's Office of Health Affairs and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have collaborated on the development of a pilot program to provide surplus pre-event anthrax vaccines from the Strategic National Stockpile to first responders. This legislation authorizes such a program.³

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) that enacting H.R. 1300 would cost approximately \$4 million over the 2016 to 2020 period, assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts. Enacting H.R. 1300 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information please contact [Jerry White](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 5-0190.

¹ [Amerithrax or Anthrax Investigation](#), U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation

² See House Report [114-222](#) at 3.

³ *Id.*